

Message Text

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SUBJ: DRAFT LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER RE INDOCHINESE
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

REF A, STATE 226634, B. BANGKOK 25917

1. VERY MUCH APPRECIATE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON DRAFT LETTER BEING CLEARED IN THE DEPARTMENT REGARDING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT. WE BELIEVE THAT LETTER PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING THE RESETTLEMENT ISSUE IN OUR APPROACHES WITH THE THAI. AT THE SAME TIME, THE RTG REMAINS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE WITH REGARD TO THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ISSUE, AS EVIDENCED BY HARTLING VISIT HERE IN WHICH DISCUSSIONS WERE STRAINED AND AT TIMES ACrimonious BECAUSE OF UNHCR HEAVY-HANDED APPROACH. WE ARE CONSEQUENTLY CONCERNED THAT A DETAILED LETTER AS SUGGESTED BY THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT WELL BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AT THE PRESENT TIME. BELIEVE THAT FOR OUR IMMEDIATE PURPOSES FOLLOWING LETTER CLOSER TO THE LINES WE PROPOSED REF B WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE. AT LATER TIME WE MAY WANT TO SEND MORE DETAILED LETTER ON RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND.

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2. QUOTE DEAR MR. PRIME MINISTER, DURING THE VISIT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE, MY GOVERNMENT OFFERED TO MAKE TWO MILLION DOLLARS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY OF LOCAL SETTLEMENT FOR SOME INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN THAILAND.

3. THERE ARE NOW APPROXIMATELY 115,000 INDOCHINESE

REFUGEES IN UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMPS IN THAILAND. THE UNITED STATES INTENDS TO CONTINUE ACCEPTING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES OVER THE LONG TERM; WE ALSO INTEND TO CONTINUE EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ACCEPT SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FROM THAILAND.

4. JUST AS WE AND OTHER COUNTRIES ARE ACCEPTING FOR PERMANENT SETTLEMENT MANY OF THE REFUGEES IN THAILAND, PERHAPS THE THAI GOVERNMENT CAN ACCEPT SOME OF THE REFUGEES NOW IN TEMPORARY CAMPS ON A LONGER-TERM BASIS. MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION NEED NOT IMPLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT PERMANENTLY ALL THE REFUGEES NOW IN THAILAND. IN FACT, WE UNDERSTAND THAT ANY PROGRESS TOWARD LOCAL SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IS PREMISED ON CONTINUING ACCEPTANCE OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND BY THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES. AT THE SAME TIME, PROGRESS IN RESETTLEMENT FOR SOME REFUGEES IN THAILAND SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE UNITED STATES TO CONTINUE ITS ACCEPTANCE PROGRAM FOR INDOCHINESE AS WE CAN DEMONSTRATE TO OUR CONGRESS THAT THERE IS EFFECTIVE, JOINT ACTION IN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT.

5. IN MAKING THE TWO MILLION DOLLARS AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT WE HAVE NO PRECONCEIVED FORMULA IN MIND. WE BELIEVE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FUNDS MIGHT BEST BE USED IN PILOT PROJECT(S) WHICH INVOLVE SELECTING A SMALL NUMBER OF REFUGEES FROM THE PRESENT CAMPS, AND PROVIDING FOR THESE REFUGEES THE MEANS TO BECOME MORE SELF-SUFFICIENT. PRESUMABLY SUCH PROJECT(S) COULD INVOLVE BOTH RELOCATION OF SOME REFUGEES, AS WELL AS A PROJECT DISPERSING THE REFUGEES IN THE THAI POPULATION WITH A CHANGE IN THEIR ECONOMIC STATUS FROM THE PRESENT CAMP SITUATION.

6. FOR OUR PART, I AND MY STAFF ARE AVAILABLE AT ANY TIME TO DISCUSS ANY ASPECT OF OUR PROPOSAL, OR THE REFUGEE PROGRAM IN GENERAL. INITIALLY I WILL BE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR CARRYING DISCUSSIONS FORWARD WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT. AFTER THE GENERAL TERMS OF THE PROJECT(S) HAVE BEEN AGREED UPON, OTHER COUNTERPART RELATIONSHIPS MAY BE IDENTIFIED AS NECESSARY. IF THIS APPEARS A USEFUL APPROACH TO YOU, I WOULD ASK THAT YOU DESIGNATE AN OFFICIAL IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND WHO COULD SERVE AS A PRINCIPAL POINT OF CONTACT. SINCERELY, UNQUOTE.

7. WOULD APPRECIATE EARLY APPROVAL FOR OUR PROPOSED

LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER. ABRAMOWITZ

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